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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: SENATOR HAGEL DISCUSSES TRADE, PEACE CORPS, HUMAN RIGHTS  
WITH DPM/FM KHIEM

#### Summary

1. (SBU) On October 10, Senator Chuck Hagel discussed Vietnam's WTO accession, Human Rights and the Peace Corps with the GVN's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Pham Gia Khiem. Khiem noted that the GVN is working to prepare for the President's upcoming visit by fulfilling its commitments under WTO and "working hard on issues like the Peace Corps agreement." End Summary.

2. (SBU) On October 10, Senator Chuck Hagel and the Charge met with DPM/FM Pham Gia Khiem. Khiem was due to speak to the Politburo so the meeting was truncated to just 30 minutes. Senator Hagel expressed condolences for the recent deaths in Vietnam due to Typhoon Xangsane. In addition, he praised the GVN's efforts to put together a good agenda for President Bush's upcoming visit during the APEC Leaders Summit and noted that a Peace Corps country agreement would also be a positive development for the President's visit.

3. (SBU) Khiem responded that the GVN is pleased that the bilateral relationship continues to improve, especially since Former Prime Minister Phan Van Khai's trip to the United States last June. Trade has quintupled in the last five years, and U.S. firms have invested over USD three billion in Vietnam. Security and military cooperation has also improved. Khiem stated that the GVN is working hard in advance of the President's visit on issues like reaching a Peace Corps agreement (mentioned by Senator Hagel as a desirable deliverable for the POTUS visit) that will help to strengthen the relationship.

4. (SBU) Khiem also stated that the GVN looks forward to the Congress' passage of Permanent Normal Trading Relations (PNTR) legislation for Vietnam. Vietnam is "trying to comply" with their WTO accession obligations especially in the area of intellectual property rights, he said. Senator Hagel replied that he hopes the Congress will vote on PNTR during the week of November 13 and predicted that, when the vote occurs, the PNTR bill will pass with bipartisan support.

5. (SBU) Senator Hagel also noted that the United States appreciates the GVN's efforts to improve human rights in Vietnam and pledged that the USG will continue to work with Hanoi on these issues. Khiem noted that the GVN considers its human rights policy a priority. He also requested that the United States strengthen cooperation with Vietnam on remediation of the effects of Agent Orange (AO). Hagel agreed that AO is an important issue and pledged that the United States "will keep our commitments on this issue."

6. (SBU) Senator Hagel has cleared this message.

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